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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of
International Day for Biological Diversity**

22 May 2020

Every year, in late May and early June, UNESCO celebrates three major international days which are an important opportunity to consider together the three systemic pillars of climate change: biodiversity, the environment and the oceans.

This year, at a time when the world has been struggling with an unprecedented pandemic for many weeks, these days are the occasion to remind us once again that it is only with a cross-cutting and ambitious approach that we can build a more ecologically-sustainable future.

Of these three pillars, it is without doubt biodiversity that has been the most talked about in these recent weeks of widespread lockdown. The retreat into the private sphere and the desertion of most public spaces have temporarily blurred the sharing of space between humans and other species.

Animals we would not expect to see have been roaming cities, and entire natural areas have been reclaimed by species no longer hiding to nest and perpetuate themselves. Emerging from the invisible margins to which it is usually condemned, nature has seemed for a time to be retaking its territory.

By allowing us to see in a limited amount of time what we usually struggle to perceive, this parenthesis in lockdown has reminded us, in contrast, of what the global report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), published a year ago at UNESCO, said: the world of living things is disappearing and infectious diseases might proliferate as a result.

This disappearance threatens us directly: the living fabric that is biodiversity is not foreign to us; our food, health and well-being depend upon it.

The pandemic must therefore compel us to think within this web of interdependence and to intensify mobilization, so that we turn away from the destructive trajectory we are on.

Solutions exist. UNESCO is identifying them, analysing them and, above all, making them known: an online meeting will thus take place on 22 May, to make public all the knowledge that is being developed in every part of the world, in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, world heritage sites, UNESCO's global network and indigenous communities that have so much to teach us about another relationship with life.

On International Day for Biological Diversity, let us therefore express the hope that this health crisis will give decisive impetus to the protection of biodiversity, and let us make more than ever our own this saying of Édouard Glissant, "act where you are, think with the world".